

Fatigue (La fatigue)

Fatigue is one of the commonest symptoms of cancer and its treatments.

It is demonstrated by **difficulty in performing activities requiring physical effort and maintaining intellectual activity. Simple activities** such as preparing a meal, going upstairs, doing housework, washing, dressing, talking, reading, making a decision, etc. **become really difficult.** Moreover **anxiety and stress** may add to existing fatigue.



The intensity and duration of fatigue vary with the type of treatment.

- **Surgery is tiring. Fatigue is often severe one week after surgery.** It gradually diminishes over one to two months, and usually disappears three months after the surgical procedure.
- **Fatigue is also common during chemotherapy. It is intensified four to six days after the cycle,** then gradually diminishes until the next cycle. Fatigue varies with the type of chemotherapy and the patient's experience of each cycle. Everyone reacts differently. Patients often speak of **fatigue which accumulates with every cycle.**
- **Fatigue is also very common during radiotherapy. It develops gradually as the treatment continues,** this generally lasting between five and seven weeks. **Fatigue is more intense at the end of treatment and may last for two to three months after the end of radiotherapy.**

Treatment of fatigue

Patients often think that fatigue is normal and rarely mention it to their doctor.

This can generate a feeling of helplessness, distress and sometimes depression.

However, the fatigue you feel must not be reduced to something unimportant but should be treated as soon as it appears.

Your doctor usually works within a multidisciplinary team composed of different health professionals who can **treat fatigue specifically:**

physiotherapist, dietician, psychologist, etc. They can help you optimise your particular abilities, improve your quality of life and keep hopes high throughout your disease.

Please don't hesitate to ask them any questions which are worrying you.

What you can do on a daily basis

To cope with fatigue, you must sometimes envisage **planning your daily life differently**. Here are some tips:

- **Set priorities** for your daily and weekly objectives;
 - Give **priority to your favourite activities**,
 - Include **breaks** during the day;
 - **Delegate** certain jobs to those around you or home help professionals;
 - **Spread** household jobs through the week;
 - If you feel capable of it, **maintain some regular physical activity to recharge your body**, favour muscle maintenance, appetite and intestinal transit stimulation and good venous return. Walking, cycling, gymnastics, for example, reduce stress and fatigue. Above all, it must be a **source of pleasure and well-being**.
 - **Continue your professional activity if your condition so allows**. This may help your equilibrium, to avoid cutting yourself off from others and to prevent yourself from always thinking about illness. **You working hours and workstation can be adjusted**. Contact your personnel department or occupational doctor.
 - **Rest**. But, be careful, fatigue is not always relieved by rest. **Too much rest during the day can sometimes upset your sleeping patterns** and cause further fatigue which does not fade with rest. It is therefore important to **monitor the duration of rest** to continue to sleep well at night. This may mean **going to bed and getting up at fixed times** for example. As far as possible, **siestas should be short**. **However, if sleeping problems become too severe, don't hesitate to talk to your doctor about it**. They can propose specific medication for your case.
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